



Australian Bureau of Statistics

2060.0 - Discussion Paper: Enhancing the Population Census: Developing a Longitudinal View, 2006

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Australians asked about plans to enhance the national population census

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is seeking the views of Australians on a discussion paper - **Enhancing The Population Census: Developing a Longitudinal View** (cat. no. 2060.0) - released today.

The paper outlines a proposal to enhance the value of Census of Population and Housing information by combining it with future censuses. The proposal would expand the range of information available for statistical purposes.

Head of the census program, Paul Williams said, "The ABS sees this as an important investment in our future. It has the potential to provide richer information about Australian society and improve policy development and community decision making."

"It would make fuller use of the substantial wealth of information we bring together each 5 years in the census, for the benefit of Australians," he said.

In its present form the Census only provides a 'snapshot' about Australian people and households once every five years. If it proceeds, the proposal would provide the means to analyse patterns in the pathways people and families take over time.

Insights might be gained into the relationship between peoples' social and economic situation over their life, and their health outcomes, or the educational and economic outcomes of their children as they in turn grow to be adults.

The central feature of the proposal is the creation of a Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset (SLCD) – this involves combining the information provided in the 2006 population census, with information provided in future censuses, using statistical methods. Other parts of the proposal outline use of the census data in combination with other data sets such as ABS household surveys and birth and death register data.

"The proposal does not involve the ABS keeping name and address information from the Census. As in past censuses, the ABS will destroy any records containing name and address information once census processing is completed," said Mr Williams.

"The ABS will continue to provide the same level of protection for the confidentiality of people's information as it has done for the past 100 years of its history.

"No decision on this proposal has been made," he said. "The ABS wants to hear the views of the Australian community before making a decision".

The proposal, including the benefits that the SLCD would bring to Australia, is fully detailed in the paper. The paper is available on the ABS web site at <www.abs.gov.au>. Submissions can be made on-line through the ABS web site or on a paper form available with the discussion paper. The closing date for submissions is 10 June 2005.

The Census is the largest statistical collection undertaken by the ABS and measures the number of people in Australia along with their key characteristics. Australia's next Census, its fifteenth, will take place on 8 August 2006.

Media Note: This proposal is unrelated to the Census Archiving proposal currently being considered by Government, where people completing the Census form are given the option of having their name identified Census information stored by the National Archives of Australia for release after 99 years.

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